

REMARKS

This application has been reviewed in light of the Office Action dated March 8, 2007. Claims 6-9 are presented for examination, of which Claim 6 is in independent form. Claim 6 has been amended to define still more clearly what Applicants regard as their invention. Claim 8 has been amended as to matters of form; no change in scope is intended or deemed effected by this amendment. Favorable reconsideration is requested.

The specification has been amended to conform the Summary of Invention section to the amended claims.

Claim 6 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Japanese Patent Application Publication No. 07-015582 (Mori) in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,594,430 (Cutter). Claims 7-9 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Mori in view of Cutter, and further in view of United States Patent No. 4,718,107 (Hayes).

As shown above, Applicants have amended independent Claim 6 in terms that more clearly define what they regard as their invention. Applicants submit that this amended independent claim, together with the remaining claims dependent thereon, are patentably distinct from the cited prior art for at least the following reasons.

Claim 6 is directed to an image communication apparatus including a printing unit for printing an image by scanning a printing head discharging ink onto the recording medium, and an operation panel having operation keys for making the image communication apparatus perform a cleaning operation of the printing head by being operated. The apparatus includes: (1) cleaning means for performing a cleaning operation of the printing head by discharging ink according to an input by a key operation; (2) a key lock switch for prohibiting an input by

operation of at least one of the operation keys, wherein it is prohibited to perform a cleaning operation of the print head, under the condition that the input by the key operation is prohibited by the key lock switch; (3) reset judging means for judging whether prohibition of the input by the key lock switch is reset or not; (4) timing means; (5) appointed time information storing means for storing appointed time information; and (6) appointed time judging means for judging whether an appointed time measured by the timing means has passed or not. When the appointed time judging means judges that the appointed time has passed under the condition that the input by the key operation is prohibited by the key lock switch, the reset judging means judges that the prohibition of the input by the key lock switch is reset and the input by the key operation is allowed so that the cleaning means can perform a cleaning operation of the printing head.

Mori relates to a facsimile apparatus with a key lock switch which can prohibit use of the facsimile apparatus by anyone other than a specified user. Applicants have found nothing in Mori that would teach or suggest “an image communication apparatus including a printing unit for printing an image by scanning a printing head discharging ink onto the recording medium,” “cleaning means for performing a cleaning operation of said printing head by discharging ink according to an input by a key operation,” “a key lock switch for prohibiting an input by operation of at least one of said operation keys, wherein it is prohibited to perform a cleaning operation of said print head, under the condition that the input by the key operation is prohibited by said key lock switch” or “wherein when said appointed time judging means judges that the appointed time has passed under the condition that the input by the key operation is prohibited by said key lock switch, said reset judging means judges that the prohibition of the input by said key lock switch is reset and the input by the key operation is allowed so that said

cleaning means can perform a cleaning operation of said printing head,” as recited in Claim 6.

Cutter does not remedy the deficiencies of Mori. Cutter relates to a programmable time lock. However, Applicants have found nothing in Cutter that would teach or suggest “an image communication apparatus including a printing unit for printing an image by scanning a printing head discharging ink onto the recording medium,” “cleaning means for performing a cleaning operation of said printing head by discharging ink according to an input by a key operation,” “a key lock switch for prohibiting an input by operation of at least one of said operation keys, wherein it is prohibited to perform a cleaning operation of said print head, under the condition that the input by the key operation is prohibited by said key lock switch” or “wherein when said appointed time judging means judges that the appointed time has passed under the condition that the input by the key operation is prohibited by said key lock switch, said reset judging means judges that the prohibition of the input by said key lock switch is reset and the input by the key operation is allowed so that said cleaning means can perform a cleaning operation of said printing head,” as recited in Claim 6.

A review of the other art of record has failed to reveal anything which, in Applicants’ opinion, would remedy the deficiencies of the art discussed above, as a reference against Claim 6.

The other claims in this application are each dependent from one or another of the independent claims discussed above and are therefore believed patentable for the same reasons. Since each dependent claim is also deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, the individual reconsideration of the patentability of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

This Amendment After Final Action is believed clearly to place this application in condition for allowance and, therefore, its entry is believed proper under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116.

Accordingly, entry of this Amendment After Final Action, as an earnest effort to advance prosecution and reduce the number of issues, is respectfully requested. Should the Examiner believe that issues remain outstanding, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner contact Applicants' undersigned attorney in an effort to resolve such issues and advance the case to issue.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request favorable reconsideration and early passage to issue of the present application.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our New York office by telephone at (212) 218-2100. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

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